DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 139 144 EC 100 719

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TITLE Effect of a Summer Camp Program on Self-Concept of Mentally Retarded Young Adults.
PUB DATE Apr 77
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual International Convention, The Council for Exceptional Children (55th, Atlanta, Georgia, April 11-15, 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educable Mentally Handicapped; Exceptional Child Research; Mentally Handicapped; *Program Effectiveness; Resident Camp Programs; *Self Concept; *Summer Programs; *Trainable Mentally Handicapped; Young Adults

ABSTRACT

The effectiveness of a summer camp program in enhancing self-concept was investigated with 13 mildly and moderately mentally retarded young adults. The California Test of Personality, Primary Level, was utilized as the measure of self-concept. Results indicated significant improvement in self-concept of the experimental group over the 2-week camp period, with the most substantial change noted in personal adjustment. (Author/SBH)

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EFFECT OF A SUMMER CAMP PROGRAM ON SELF-CONCEPT OF MENTALLY RETARDED YOUNG ADULTS

Presented by

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at the

55th Annual International Convention

of the

Council for Exceptional Children

Atlanta, Georgia

Friday, April 15, 1977

EC 100719

Abstract

Self-concept, a factor strongly associated with achievement at both the academic and interpersonal levels, is generally agreed to be poorer among the mentally retarded than among the non-retarded. A summer camp program was hypothesized to enhance this depressed self-concept. Thirteen mentally retarded young adults attending a two-week summer camp served as the experimental group, with a matched control group obtained at a later date. The California Test of Personality, Primary Level, was utilized as the measure of self-concept. A one-way analysis of covariance was performed on the data, using pretest scores as the covariate. Results indicated significant improvement in self-concept of the experimental group over the two-week camp period, with the most substantial change noted in personal adjustment. The camp's provisions for individual success is theorized as contributing to the augmented self-concept.

EFFECT OF A SUMMER CAMP PROGRAM ON SELF-CONCEPT OF MENTALLY RETARDED YOUNG ADULTS

Although the matter is still under debate, most research on mental retardation and self-concept suggests that the retarded possess deficient ego-perceptions relative to their non-retarded peers (Collins, Burger & Koherty, 1970; Guthrie, 1967; Harrison & Budoff, 1972). For example, Collins and Burger (1970) reported EMR adolescents to be more defensive and to possess more negative perceptions of their relationships with others than did normals.

While a high degree of positive self-regard is clearly a prerequisite for optimal social interaction and growth, a positive self-concept has other equally important educational benefits. Hardy (1967), studying a group of EMR adolescent females, found that the higher self-concept group learned a paired-associates task more efficiently than did the low self-concept group. Similarly, in an institutional setting Wink (1963) evidenced more efficient discrimination performance among high self-concept adolescent females than their low self-concept counterparts. In light of the seemingly facilitative consequences of enhanced self-concept, various intervention techniques have been explored to augment self-perceptions in retarded populations. One of the more consistently successful approaches to enhancement of self-concept in the retarded has been in the area of recreation and leisure time activities (e.g., Thelander, 1969). Groff (1969) noted improvements in self-expression and socialization in this population through the use of arts and crafts, while

Choromanski (1968) found intensive swimming instruction to result in subsequent gains in self-confidence of EMR's. Corder (1970) reported gains in self-concept of EMR adolescent girls subsequent to a physical training program.

In more intensive recreational settings, as represented by summer camping programs, gains have been reported in self-acceptance (Freeburg, 1969), in adaptive and social behavior (Hillman, 1968), and in language development and other academic skills (Albert, 1969). Additionally, gains in self-concept and in psycho-social growth have been postulated by Goldstein (1976) and Koskaska (1969) relative to the potential benefits of such camping experiences. The purpose of the present study was to explore the effect of a summer camp program on a test of the personal and social adjustment in mentally retarded young adults.

Method

Subjects. The subjects were 15 mildly and moderately retarded individuals randomly selected from a group of 85 campers attending a two-week residential camp for the mentally retarded. Age extremes (below 16 and above 35) and IQ extremes (below 40) as measured by standard IQ tests were excluded. Of the 15 subjects originally selected, two withdrew prematurely from camp due to parental request. The remaining 13 subjects, seven females and six males, had a mean IQ of 50.4 (range 41-60) with a mean CA of 24.4 (range 17-34). Of the thirteen, nine resided with parents while attending sheltered workshops. Three others lived in state schools while one attended a private boarding school.

A control group matched on age, IQ, sex and background was obtained at a later date.

Instrumentation. The California Test of Personality (Thorpe, Clark & Tiegs, 1953), Primary Level, Forms AA and BB was employed as the measure of self-concept. While not specifically designed for and normed on the mentally retarded, it has been used successfully with such populations (Snyder, 1966; Synder, Jefferson & Strauss, 1965). The C.T.P. conceptualizes self-concept as a balance between personal and social adjustment. Thus, in addition to a Total Adjustment score, the scale yields scores for Personal Adjustment and Social Adjustment. Each of these areas is further composed of six sub-components. Personal Adjustment includes the following:

Self-Reliance, the capability for independent action;

Sense of Personal Worth, the regard of others;

Sense of Personal Freedom, self determination;

Feeling of Belonging, one's relationships with others;

Withdrawing Tendencies, the degree to which one fantasizes;

Nervous Symptoms, anxiety-related physiological symptomology.

Social Adjustment includes the following:

Social Standards, the rights of others;

Social Skills, the degree to which one assists others;

Anti-Social Tendencies, aggressiveness and destructiveness;

Family Relations, a sense of love and security in one's family;

School relations, one's educational/academic social adjustment;

Community Relations, one's neighborhood social adjustment. Reported relability for the C.T.P., Primary Level, Forms AA or BB is .88.

Procedures. Pretest self-concept measures were obtained with Form AA of the C.T.P. on the day following the subjects' arrival at camp. Posttest measures were obtained ten days later with Form BB on the day preceding the conclusion of camp. Control pretest and posttest measures were obtained over a similar temporal interval. All tests were administered by the author and an assistant.

The camp's morning program consisted of relatively structured activities such as trampolining, swimming instruction and baseball. Typically unstructured afternoon activities included recreational swimming, hiking and fishing. Evening activities, social in orientation, incorporated such varied activities as dances, talent shows, songfests and a carnival.

The basic units of the camp's social structure are individual cabins, each of which typically consist of two college student counselors and eight age-grouped campers. The majority of interpersonal interactions and relationships at camp occur on an intra-cabin basis, and it is primarily within this social framework that campers participate in camp activities.

Results. So as to control for potentially systematice pre-experimental differences between the control and experimental groups, a one-way analysis of covariance was initially performed on the data, using the Form AA pretests as the covariate. Table 1

presents the means and standard deviations for pretests, original posttets, and adjusted posttests, while Table 2 summarizes the one-way analysis of covariance.

Insert Table 1 about here

Insert Table 2 about here

The results are graphically illustrated in Figure 1, illustrating that the experimental group attending camp experienced significant gains not evidenced by the control group ($F=5.605$, 1/24 df, $p < .05$).

Insert Figure 1 about here

Further analyses of covariance were performed on subtest data, indicating that the most significant changes occurred in the area of Personal Adjustment ($F=7.91$, 1/24 df, $p < .01$), as illustrated in Figure 2. The change noted in the area of Social Adjustment, while directionally positive, was statistically insignificant ($F=3.154$, 1/24 df, NS at $p < .05$).

Insert Figure 2 about here

Discussion. The results would appear to bear out Goldstein's (1976) prediction that:

> Enjoyable and successful experiences in leisure activity may change the self-concept by increasing self-confidence, by fostering attitudes toward life, and by increasing motivation (p. 19).

The structure of the camp activities is such that all campers experience some degree of success, and it may be this newly developed increase in self-confidence inducing subsequent change in the global self-concept.

One highly pertinent question unanswered by this research is that of the relative stability of the observed improvements in self-concept over time. The strong possibility exists that these enhanced levels of self-concept deteriorate to pre-experimental levels contingent upon return to the pre-experimental environment. Thus, further similar study employing repeated measures of self-concept over time is suggested.

In summary, however, a summer camp program would appear to be an efficacious procedure in the augmentation of self-concept in mentally retarded young adults.

Table 1

Pretest, Original Posttest and Adjusted Posttest Score Means and Standard Deviations of Control and Experimental Groups

Group	N	Pretest Means	SD	Original Posttest Means	SD	Adjusted Posttest Means
Control	14	58.14	14.91	56.79	15.89	56.01
Experimental	13	56.23	9.74	64.54	13.16	65.37

Table 2

One-Way Analysis of Covariance Summary Table

Source	SSX	SSP	SSY	SS'Y	DF	MS'Y	F
Between	24.625	-99.938	405.125	586.844	1	586.844	5.605
Within	4030.063	3385.875	5357.625	2512.967	24	104.707	
Total	4054.688	3285.938	5762.750	3099.811	25		

Figure 1

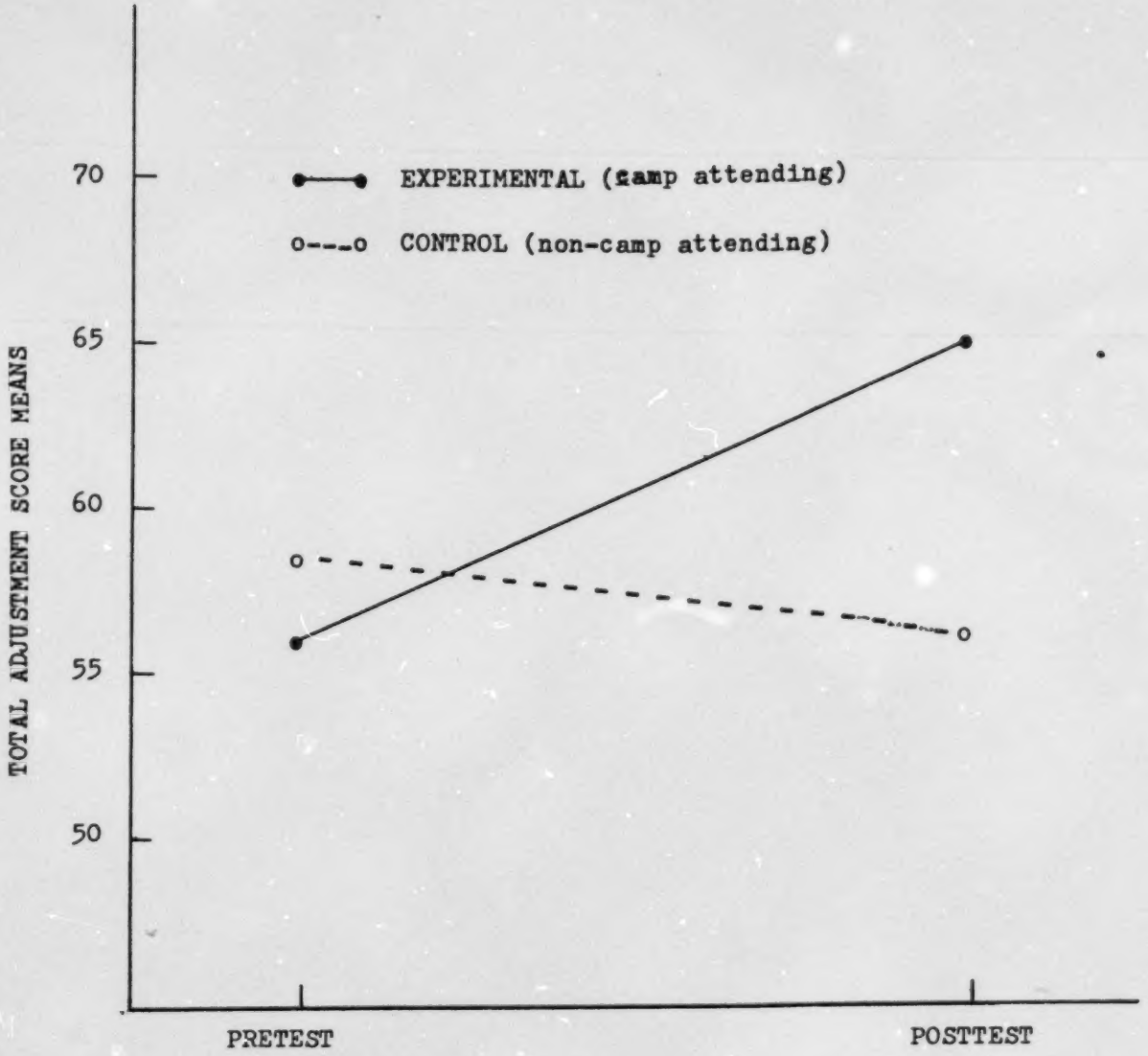
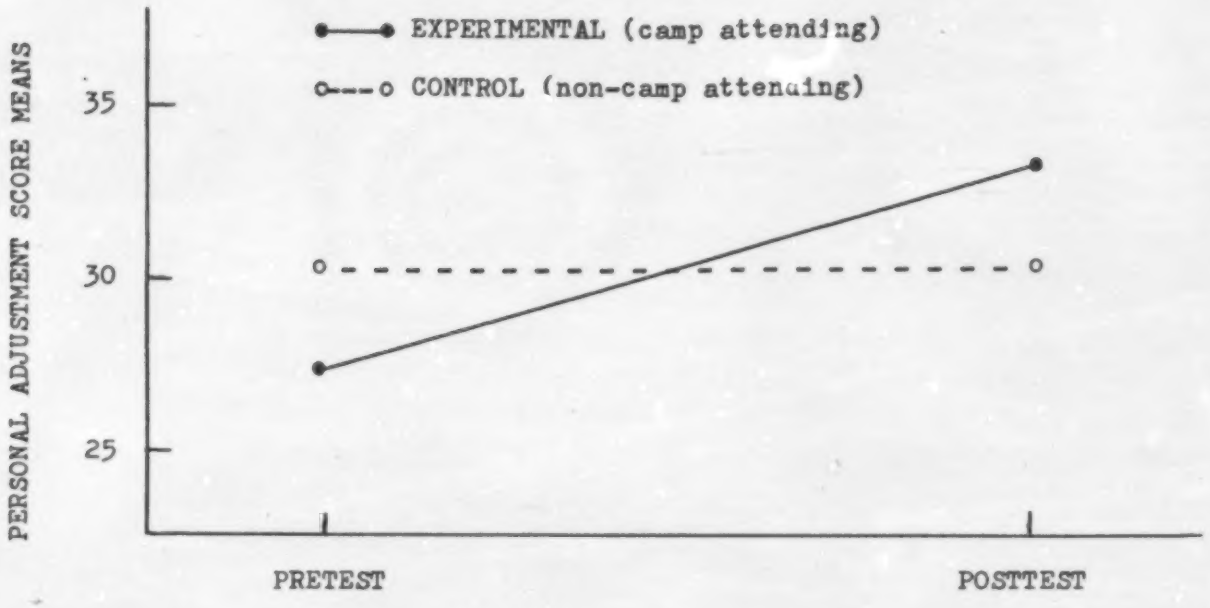
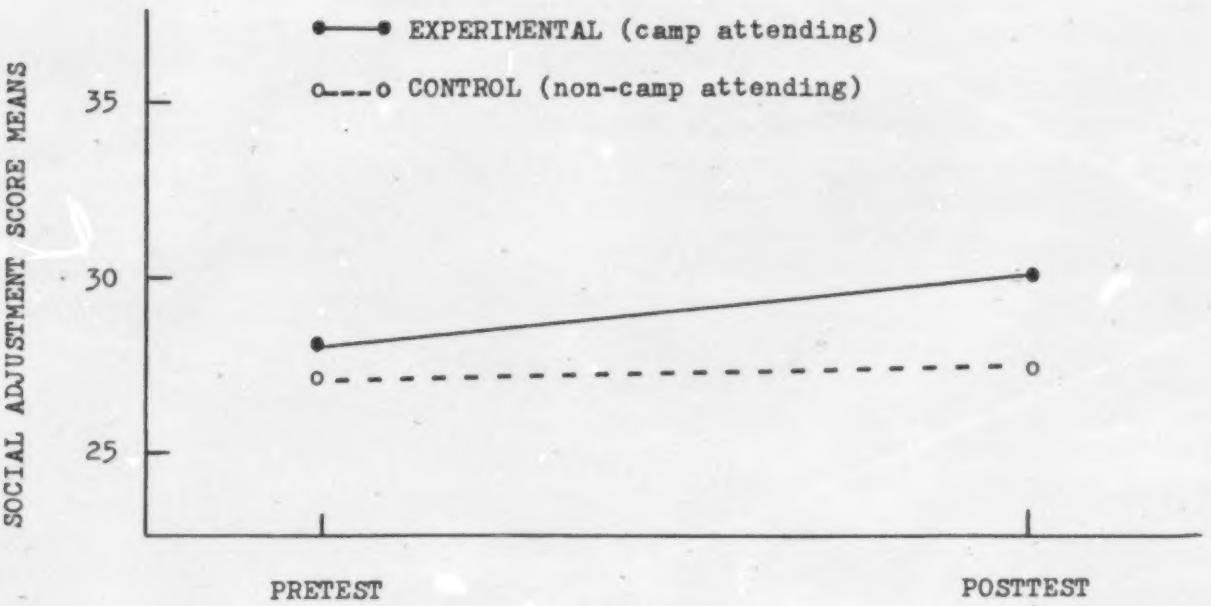

70
65
60
55
50
TOTAL ADJUSTMENT SCORE MEANS
EXPERIMENTAL (camp attending)
CONTROL (non-camp attending)
PRETEST
POSTTEST

Figure 2


EXPERIMENTAL (camp attending)
CONTROL (non-camp attending)
PERSONAL ADJUSTMENT SCORE MEANS
35
30
25
PRETEST
POSTTEST


EXPERIMENTAL (camp attending)
CONTROL (non-camp attending)
SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT SCORE MEANS
35
30
25
PRETEST
POSTTEST

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance and cooperation of Hilda Robertson and Beth Watts of Camp LARCee, and Dale Crane of the Boone County-Woodhaven Sheltered Workshop in the preparation of the study.